

## Imperfect Perfection by Val\_Creative

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Dancing Lessons, Fluff, Gay Will Byers, Humor, Hurt/Comfort, M/M, Mild Language, Mutual Pining, Post-Season/Series 02, Romantic Friendship, Snow Ball (Stranger Things)

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2017-11-18

**Updated:** 2017-11-18

**Packaged:** 2022-04-02 14:54:59

**Rating:** General Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,562

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Will teaches Mike to dance for the Snow Ball, thinking nobody will go with him anyway. Mike refuses to let Will be alone that night.

## Imperfect Perfection

### Author's Note:

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: I LOVE BYELER! JUST AS MUCH AS I LOVE MILEVEN! That being said... I had to do some more Byeler omg. There is a mild canon mention of Mileven, but they're not the focus I promise. Requested/encouraged from [captainofthecity](#) on Tumblr so big shout-out to her! And I hope you guys love this fic too! :) Comments/thoughts appreciated!

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Before he reaches the staircase landing, Will hears a loud, muffled thud and a yell of "*dammit!*"

In the dimly lit Wheeler basement, Mike grimaces and hops on a foot, rubbing his knee.

"What happened? You okay?" Will asks.

"I'm trying to... learn to dance." A hot pink flush rises to Mike's cheeks. "It's not working."

For Mike, his worst fear right now is gonna be looking like an complete idiot at Snow Ball tomorrow, and get laughed at, and then El won't come because she'll think he's an idiot too...

He rubs his knee again, frowning sullenly.

Will glances at the basement's posterred walls, shrugging his hands into his pockets absently.

"Want any help? My mom's been teaching me." Will's lips smash together, as if he's considering a disappointing thought. "Not that... anybody is gonna wanna dance with me..." he mutters.

Mike's face softens up. "Whaddya talking about? Someone's gonna dance with you."

"No. They won't, Mike," Will says solemnly.

It's the look of surrendering, bitter defeat from Will that aches Mike's stomach. Will's halfway right — most of their classmates won't go up to him and say hi, let alone dance with him. They'll gawk and whisper to each other, spread more rumors about Will being the *Zombie Boy* and a freak.

Will doesn't deserve that. He's lived through too much, and nobody understands it.

*Nobody.*

"I will," Mike tells him, nodding stubbornly. "If nobody dances with you at Snow Ball, I'll dance with you. Cross my heart." He motions a criss-crossing X against his double pocket shirt with his index finger.

Will's mouth slacks open a little, eyes rounding.

"Really...?"

"Yeah!" Mike smiles, relieved to see the other boy slowly smile back. "You're my best friend, Will. Of course I wanna dance with you."

"But *can* you dance?" Will asks. Mike senses the exaggerated mock-skepticism, laughing aloud.

"... No," he admits. "That doesn't help, does it?"

Will shakes his head, amused, grabbing onto Mike's wrists in silence and draping his hands limply to Will's shoulders.

Mike's heart skips.

They're maybe a foot apart in height difference, but Mike feels suddenly feels so much tinier.

"Okay, right, put your feet apart like this," Will instructs. He plants his feet firmly to the ground and waits for Mike to follow him. Will's

own hands drift to Mike's shoulders, lightly resting. "Now trying shifting your weight to the left, but lean forward. *But* not too much." The words blur and garble up quickly in Mike's head before he processes them. "Then move forward, and shift your weight back equally on both of your feet."

Mike releases a breath, focusing on the warmth and fondness of Will's eyes, instead of the heat of his fingers soaking through Mike's clothes. He shifts himself, managing to not collide into Will, resting his weight.

"Did I do it right?" he murmurs, going nervous but trying to bury it down with a pleasant smile.

"*Mhm.*"

"Thanks, Will." Mike says lowly, almost bashfully, stepping away. "So when do you wanna meet tomorrow night—?" He pauses, noticing how Will's dark brown eyes go cloudy, confused. The other boy grinds his palm harshly against his forehead, knees quivering. "Will?"

"*Don't feel so good,*" Will mumbles, clutching onto the other boy's sleeve and bending over.

Mike wraps his arms tightly around him, keeping Will upright just in case they both end up on the floor. There's no more Gates, no more Mind Player or Will acting possessed — but Will's body still needs to recover this past month, or so says Will's mom.

He got sicker than everybody else when the flu rushed through Hawkins; Will got weaker, his lungs inflamed.

Mike wishes he could fix this. He wishes he could take all of the nightmares, all of Will's fears and his doubts, and have them instead. Will doesn't need to *suffer* anymore.

"Hey, Will," Mike calls out, his voice gentle. "Do you need your inhaler? Is it in your backpack?"

Will's mouth trembles apart.

"No... no, *haah*. I-I'm okay."

Mike helps him on the raggedy, brown sofa, sitting them down. He rubs Will's back, peering into Will's determined expression. "You sure?"

A pale-faced Will massages over his chest, breathing in deeply and coughing. It's a faint sound and not rattling. That's a good sign.

Really good.

Mike examines him as Will's color gradually returns, and as the other boy nods, looking up.

*"Dinner's ready, boys!"*

"Alright! One second, Mom!" Mike turns his head and yells forcefully towards the basement staircase. He offers a wide, comforting grin to the other boy, standing with Will, letting him go. "She made cheesy lasagna. I think she remembers you liked it before."

It's worth heckling his mom for the past week about cooking it — just to see Will brighten up.

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Halfway through the Snow Ball, Mike notices the gymnasium is overcrowded and overheated.

It makes sweat trickle down the back of his neck and soak into his dress shirt's collar. There's no sign of El, or Hopper's police car to escort her.

Mike peeks his head out the doors, grumbling.

"You guys seen Will?" he asks, charging over to Dustin and Lucas on the other side of the rickety-looking snack table, gulping down the punch, laughing until he interrupts. At this, Dustin sighs and rolls his eyes a little.

"For the thousandth time, Mike—*no*."

"He's probably sick again," Lucas adds, appearing worried for a moment. "He's been quiet about it."

Mike's mouth screws up. "I'll radio you later, see you," he blurts out, racing immediately for the entrance and clipping into Jonathan who nearly spills his own punch onto himself.

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He bikes his way across town at a frantic pace, after yanking off his tie and unbuttoning his jacket.

The night air feels cool against Mike's blazing-red cheeks. He slows in the driveway, throwing down his bicycle and sprinting to the front door, knocking impatiently. Mike's heels bounce against the outdoor mat.

"Oh my goodness!" Will's mom exclaims, smiling. "Michael, what are you doing here so late—"

"—Is Will okay?"

He's not reassured by the falter in her voice. "Um, well..." Will's mom presses her knuckles against her lips, trying to smile again. "He's just tired," she admits. "He wasn't feeling up to going to the school dance."

"Can I see him?" Mike asks, frowning and a bit winded.

She nods slowly, eyeing him.

"Sure, honey. Come in. I'll get you a glass of water." Will's mom steps aside, touching his arm. "Will might be sleeping, so if he is... try and let him rest, okay?"

Mike's not sure what to expect, but not a gigantic, brightly lit fort taking up the middle of Will's bedroom. It's made of several kitchen chairs and quilts, with a slit for the opening. He crouches down, pushing aside the edge of a quilt to glance inside.

Will lays curled up with a mound of pillows and action figures, lightly snoring.

A soft, amused noise escapes Mike.

He's about to get that glass of water when the other boy jerks his

limbs and cries unintelligibly in his sleep, tossing his head back.

His heart sinks.

"Will," Mike whispers, crawling inside the fort. He grabs onto Will's shoulder, feeling helpless to his friend's vivid nightmare, shuddering Will's entire body. "Will, it's me. It's Mike. Hey." Mike tries shaking him a little, then cupping the side of his face with one hand and raising his voice firmly. "*Will*, please."

Somehow, someway, Will must have heard him. He snuffles, rubbing his nose and finally calming.

"*Mike?*"

As soon as Will's eyes crack open, Mike grins and bends over him, hugging onto Will. It's secure and loosening, as Will hugs him back uncertainly, blinking out the gleam of the white string-lights.

"*Mike...*" he mumbles. "*Could you let up? You stink.*"

"Gee, thanks," Mike retorts, just glad to see Will's faint smirk.

"What are you doing here, Mike?" Will asks him, clearing his throat and sitting up. "Is the Snow Ball over?"

"I... I came here instead."

Mike's face reddens under Will's disbelieving look.

"... why?"

"Because you weren't *there*," Mike says indignantly, picking at the fancy buttons on his dress-shirt sleeve. "What was the point? How am I supposed to dance without my teacher?"

It's probably for the better — he still feels like an idiot moving his own feet, and being under Will's gaze.

"Come on," Will says derisively, nodding, grabbing onto one of Mike's arms.

"Huh—"

What sounds like jingly instrumental music drifts under Will's bedroom door, likely provided by Will's mom decorating their living room for the holidays, humming along. It's not anything like perfect, but Will's the model dance partner, guiding him through the steps once more, letting Mike take it as slow as he wants.

"Shift the *other* way," he says, laughing at Mike's almost-glower.

"You shift."

Will's hands lower to Mike's sides, pressing down lightly and trying to lead him again. Mike curses to himself how easily he gets like this, as the other boy smiles warmly and meets his eyes.

He doesn't know how, but Will does that to him sometimes. Just *sometimes*.

Will makes him feel like he's becomes lighter, on his feet and in his head, getting Mike dizzy. It's probably the spinning, but Mike thinks he likes it that way, gripping his fingers into the shoulders of Will's fleecy pajama-top. Just as long as it's Will.

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